97TH CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES { REPORT
2d Session } { No. 97-484

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE CONGRESS THAT STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD SUPPORT THE FIRE SAFETY EFFORTS OF THE U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION TO REDUCE LIVES AND PROPERTY DAMAGE LOST BY FIRE

APRIL 26, 1982.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

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Mr. FUQUA, from the Committee on Science and Technology, submitted the following

REPORT

together with

AN ADDITIONAL VIEW

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 288]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Science and Technology, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 288) expressing the sense of the Congress that State and local governments should support the fire safety efforts of the United States Fire Administration to reduce lives and property damage lost by fire, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the concurrent resolution as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

On Page 2, in the third clause of the preamble, strike out ": Research" and insert in lieu thereof "research".

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On February 26, 1981, Mrs. Cardiss Collins (Democrat of Illinois) introduced House Concurrent Resolution 81. On March 10, 1982, the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Technology considered House Concurrent Resolution 81 and adopted the resolution with an amendment. By unanimous voice vote, the subcommittee ordered a clean resolution to be introduced for consideration by the full committee. The clean concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 288, was introduced on March 15, 1982, by Mrs. Collins, for herself, Mr. Walgren and Mrs. Heckler. Subsequently, on March 23, 1982, the Committee on Science and Technology ordered favorably reported House Concurrent Resolution 288 with an amendment.

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PURPOSE OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 288

The purpose of this concurrent resolution is to encourage State and local governments to continue support of the fire safety efforts of the USFA and to stress that Congress should continue support of the goals and programs of the USFA.

BACKGROUND

Current administration fiscal year 1983 budget proposals do not include funding for the USFA, although current proposals do request funding for the National Fire Academy. The administration believes that "firefighting is clearly a local function, and that the Federal role in this area should be limited". The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control released a comprehensive report on this Nation's fire problem, "America Burning" (1973) which in part supports the administration's opinions no fire prevention and control. However, this historic report found that although the primary responsibilities for fire prevention and control should remain a local responsibility, the Federal Government had a significant role to play in meeting this national problem. The Commission found that the Federal Government's role should include:

Lending technical and educational assistance to State and local governments;

Collecting and analyzing fire information;

Regulating the flammability of materials;

Conducting research and development;

Providing financial assistance when adequate fire protection lies beyond a community's means.

The Commission found that to the extent that these functions were being performed at all, they were scattered among several Federal agencies. Consequently, the Commission recommended the establishment of the USFA, an entity in the Federal Government where the Nation's fire problem would be viewed in its entirety.

As a result of this report, Congress passed the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (Public Law 93–498), which established the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration as an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The new Administration's mission was the coordination of Federal, State, and local resources to reduce the Nation's fire losses.

In 1978, Public Law 95–422 changed the name of the agency to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and expanded its responsibilities to include coordinating Federal programs to combat arson.

On April 1, 1979, the USFA was transferred from the Commerce Department to the newly created Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the President's Reorganization Plan No. 3. As part of FEMA, the USFA has had the primary responsibility to advise the FEMA Director on fire prevention, suppression, and hazard mitigation, and to serve as the lead Federal agency responsible for combating the fire problem. The USFA was divided into three program areas: National Fire Academy, Office of Planning and Education, and the National Fire Data Center. In addition, the USFA supports the Center for Fire Research as the National Bureau of Standards.

On June 8, 1981, an internal reorganization of FEMA became effective. The reorganization took the National Fire Academy out of the

USFA and placed it within the training and educational program. This most recent change means that the Superintendent of the Fire Academy reports to the Associate Director of Training and Education instead of the Administrator of the USFA.

The committee feels that the goals and programs of the USFA should be supported. An outstanding list of accomplishments of the USFA are as follows:

1. *Arson.*—It is estimated that arson accounts for more than $1.5 billion a year in direct losses and nearly 25 percent of all fires. In recognition of this serious national problem, the Fire Administration has developed and implemented a national strategy for coordinating Federal, State, and local public and private sector efforts to attack arson, one of the Nation's fastest growing crimes. Starting with the USFA's report to Congress on arson, the program has taken action on all the report's recommendations for the public sector and most of those involving the private sector, established an arson task force in more than 300 communities, and initiated a Federal arson task force which coordinates the initiatives of 12 Federal agencies involved in arson. These and other programs have produced significant results in many communities.

2. *Residential Fire Sprinklers.*—The Fire Administration assessed the market potential and the obstacles to acceptance of home sprinklers, and their potential impact on the more than 4,000 fire fatalities and $2 billion in fire loss that occur in private dwellings each year. Other USFA projects provided the engineering breakthroughs needed to create a viable system.

3. *Public Fire Education Network.*—Workshops in public fire education planning have been provided to fire service network representatives in all 50 States. Millions of adults have been reached by USFA public education materials, producing documented increases in their fire safety knowledge and behavior. In addition, millions of young Americans have obtained access to the fire safety education program through the "Sesame Street" television program.

4. *Smoke Detectors.*—Through information collected by the National Fire Data Center, it was determined that the chances of an occupant surviving a residential fire are doubled if the dwelling unit is protected by a smoke detector. In the mid 1970's when the USFA was established, smoke detectors were installed in less than 5 percent of all households, but by 1982, that percentage had risen to well over 50 percent. The USFA's contribution to the increased use of smoke detectors has included production and promotion of over 50 brochures, reports, articles, fact sheets, prototype posters and decals, sample TV and radio public service announcements, and other materials, all targeted to particular detector issues and audiences.

5. *Fire Depariment Management Tools.*—Fire defense and emergency response planning (master planning) and comprehensive code enforcement are improved through technical assistance provided to 138 communities to date; 48 communities in 45 States have already adopted plans; and more than a dozen of these communities have reported subsequent savings or reduced fire incidents. Reduced insurance costs, improved fire station location and comprehensive fire prevention planning add up to millions of dollars in cost savings to communities.

6. *National Fire Academy.*—More than 15,000 students will be trained in 1982 through the Academy's accredited resident and field

programs. By training the trainers, the Academy will be able to reach students at a rate of nearly 40,000 per year in 1983 and succeeding year.

7. *Data on National Fire Problem.*—Data from more than 9,000 fire departments in 40 States and the District of Columbia, assembled in the National Fire Incident Report System (NFIRS) has been utilized by manufacturers, insurance companies, public interest groups, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, State legislators and several committees of Congress. The collection of accurate information serves to improve local, State, Federal and private sector decisionmaking capabilities. In addition, the NFIRS system provides greater standardization, detail, easy to use computer packages and training in analytic techniques. FEMA has documented dozens of major uses of USFA data in State and local government decisions.

8. *Firefighter Protective Clothing.*—USFA research has led to a new integrated ensemble capable of sharply reducing the current high rates of firefighter fatalities and injuries. The new ensemble provides increased protection and mobility by reducing weight by 40 percent while adding only 25 percent to 30 percent to the cost. The new ensemble also provides better protection against heat, cuts, punctures, and impact.

FINDINGS

The fire problem in the United States is predominantly the result of many fires each causing limited damage. Our Nation's fire departments do a good job of controlling the fires they are called upon to extinguish. Loss per fire in the United States is below that of most industrialized nations. However, the problem this Nation faces is that so many fires occur—over 2.7 million destructive fires are attended by fire departments each year. Although they receive far less attention from the press and the public, twenty times more deaths are caused by fire in this country each year than by floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes combined.

Specifically, USFA data shows that annually approximately 8,000 people die from fire and over 300,000 people are injured and more than $5 billion worth of property is lost. If one includes the total cost of meeting fire and building codes, installing protective systems, maintaining fire departments, and insuring property, the total rises to a staggering $21 billion each year.

Clearly America needs to do a better job of preventing costly fires. As mandated by the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act, the USFA developed programs which placed priority on fire prevention. The USFA places emphasis on stimulating fire prevention activity by private sector and local community organizations. Their primary thrust is to provide guidance and direction in the development of programs and tools that will be adopted by communities in their individual efforts to deal with fire and emergencies.

The resolution as reported stresses that Congress should continue to support the goals and programs of the USFA, as recommended in the report "America Burning". The committee is concerned that the deletion of funding for the USFA is not justifiable unless we can be assured of detailed plans for continuing or arranging orderly transfer of programs such as residential fire safety, public education, National Fire Data Center, emergency first response, firefighter health and

safety, Operation Dixieland, rural fire prevention demonstration, arson prevention, and emergency medical services. The committee and Congress must be assured that the legislation mandates of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act will not be neglected.

In approving this resolution, the committee recognizes the importance of the ongoing programs conducted at the USFA to public safety and our Nation's ability to respond to fires and all types of hazards. Finally, the increasingly limited resources available for fire protection at all levels of government justify a need to support and continue the proven Federal-local partnership of the USFA.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT-FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to Clause 2(l)(3), rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and under the authority of clause 2(b)(1) and clause 3(f), rule X, the following committee oversight findings and recommendations are incorporated in the recommendations found in the present bill and report.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On March 23, 1982, the committee ordered favorably reported the concurrent resolution by unanimous voice vote.

OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

No findings or recommendations on oversight activity pursuant to Clause 2(b)(2), Rule X, and 2(l)(3), rule XI, of the Rules of the House of Representatives have been submitted by the Committee on Government Operations for inclusion in this report.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE ESTIMATES

The following information pursuant to section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 has been provided to the Committee on Science and Technology by the Congressional Budget Office.

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, D.C., April 13, 1982.

Hon. DON FUQUA,
Chairman, Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to Section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Congressional Budget Office has reviewed House Concurrent Resolution 288, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that State and local governments should support the fire safety efforts of the U.S. Fire Adminstration to reduce lives and property damage lost by fire, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Science and Technology, March 23, 1982.

Based on this review, it is expected that no additional cost to the Government would be incurred as a result of enactment of this legislation.

Sincerely,

RAYMOND C. SCHEPPACH,
(For Alice M. Rivlin, Director).

ADDITIONAL VIEW OF HON. CARDISS COLLINS

I am pleased that my colleagues unanimously reported House Concurrent Resolution 288, a resolution which not only supports the fire safety efforts of the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), but stresses the importance of its continued existence in terms of completing the mission mandated by the Congress in the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974, Public Law 93–498. House Congressional Resolution 288 now carries a much more powerful message than was originally drafted primarily because the administration has proposed not to fund the USFA in fiscal year 1983. The Committee on Science and Technology, in its wisdom, added language to the resolution which reaffirms the effectiveness of the USFA and that it should continue its efforts.

My interest in the area of fire prevention and safety was heightened during the rash of fires in both commercial and residential buildings which took place in 1980–81; well publicized fires like the MGM Grand Hotel fire which claimed 84 lives and the smaller, not so publicized fires which have and are occurring in cities across the Nation. My immediate reaction to the seemingly senseless destruction of lives and property focused on what Congress could do to assist the fire administration. Hence, I initiated meetings with officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, USFA. During those discussions, one message in particular surfaced; fire protection and safety is a local problem which must be handled at that level since the fire administration has no statutory authority to investigate major fires. Working with representatives of the fire administration, my staff drafted a resolution of support for the USFA which I introduced on February 26, 1981. This measure gave USFA officials "clout" when working with local officials on fire safety issues.

One point that was driven home as a result of meetings with fire administration representatives is the fact that on many localities, not enough attention has or is being paid to either strengthening existing fire and building codes or enforcing to the letter, codes already on the books. Add to that, the lack of adequate fire prevention devices either in homes or apartments and you have preventable live threatening situations on your hands. Passage of House Concurrent Resolution 288 would demonstrate to officials on the local level that Congress is behind USFA's efforts to enforce and seek uniformity of fire and safety codes, provide and share necessary technical knowledge and expertise useful in upgrading existing codes and encourage the private and commercial installation of fire prevention and safety devices such as smoke detectors and sprinkler systems.

If we in Congress do not send the directive that the USFA has been and is now effective in reducing the acceptably high rate of death, injury and property loss in the U.S. within this decade, then we have

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failed to recognize that the total destruction by fire of billions of dollars worth of our Nation's resources annually is counter to our economic recovery. With the total cost of fire (which includes property damage/loss, deaths, injuries, etc.) estimated at approximately $21 billion, we must continue to support and fund the Fire Administration's involvement in such programs as: development and application of model residential fire safety measures, arson abatement, emergency medical services, public fire safety education, fire service resource management, code administration and enforcement and other components vital to a national program of fire prevention and control. Consequently, funding is necessary and required in order to continue cutting the Nation's fire death and dollar loss.

CARDISS COLLINS.

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